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PTQ1477

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)PAGE 01 CARACA 04175 01 OF 02 231116Z
ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	NP-00	AID-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00
	DINT-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	OES-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00
	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/009W	

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O 231012Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9275
INFO DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
OPEC COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 004175

DEPT ALSO FOR DS/IP/WHA, S/ES-O/DS, AND DS/DSS/ITA
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NSC FOR LLORENS
ENERGY FOR D.PHUMPHREY, A.LOCKWOOD, M.BILLIG, AND B.MARCOIS
USAID FOR DCHA/OTI - RON ULLRICH AND RUSSELL PORTER
PASS TO USAID WASHDC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/20/2012
TAGS: EPET, PGOV, ASEC, VE
SUBJECT: CARACAS GASOLINE SITUATION

CLASSIFIED BY: CHARGE FREDERICK B. COOK, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

UNCLASSIFIED

1. (C) WHOLESALE GASOLINE INDUSTRY SOURCES DIFFERED ON DECEMBER 19 IN THEIR ASSESSMENTS OF HOW MUCH GASOLINE CARACAS HAS LEFT, BUT AGREE THAT THE GASOLINE WILL BE IN EXTREMELY SHORT SUPPLY EARLY THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 23. ON DECEMBER 20, THE GOV IS PUBLICIZING THE IMMIMENT DELIVERY OF 150 TANKER LOADS TO THE CITY, BUT OUR SOURCES ARE SKEPTICAL AND ALSO POINT OUT THAT THIS IS ONLY 40 PERCENT OF THE NORMAL DAILY DEMAND OF THE GREATER CARACAS AREA. A WELL-INFORMED U.S. BUSINESSMAN BELIEVES THE GOV HAS SO FAR BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN PURCHASING GASOLINE INTERNATIONALLY. HE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOV WILL EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO PURCHASE GASOLINE ON THE U.S. GULF COAST AND CALCULATES THAT IT WOULD TAKE 10 DAYS FOR SUCH A LOAD TO REACH THE MARKET.

GASOLINE SUPPLIES) STATUS DECEMBER 19
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2. (C) ON DECEMBER 19, ECONOFF DISCUSSED THE GASOLINE SITUATION WITH [REDACTED] BOTH OF WHICH OPERATE SERVICE STATION CHAINS IN VENEZUELA. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] BETWEEN 70-80 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL FUEL SECTOR IS WITHOUT PRODUCT; THE STATISTICS FOR MOBIL BRAND STATIONS ARE THE SAME. [REDACTED] REPORTED THAT ALL TEXACO STATIONS IN CARACAS ARE DRY. THEY BOTH COMMENTED THAT THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINES HAD PUBLISHED ITS LIST OF SERVICE STATIONS WHICH WILL HAVE PRIORITY FOR SUPPLY (ABOUT 1/3 OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK) ON DECEMBER 19. BOTH ALSO COMMENTED ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING RELIABLE INFORMATION OUT OF THE MILITARY WHICH IS CURRENTLY CONTROLLING THE SUPPLY NETWORK, SAYING THAT ALL IS CONFUSION.

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3. (C) [REDACTED] CALCULATED THAT GUATIRE, THE SUPPLY CENTER WHICH SUPPLIES THE GREATER CARACAS AREA, HAD STOCKS TO FILL 240 TANKER TRUCKS. ACCORDING TO ITS INFORMATION, 80 TRUCKS A DAY ARE BEING FILLED, THEREFORE THE STOCK SHOULD LAST FOR THREE DAYS (THROUGH DECEMBER 21). [REDACTED] DISPUTED THIS REPORT, SAYING THAT IT HAD BEEN WAITING FOR SUPPLY ON DECEMBER 19 THAT HAD, SO FAR, NOT BEEN LOADED. [REDACTED] SAID HE BELIEVED GUATIRE HAD A 1-2 DAY SUPPLY BUT HE WAS SKEPTICAL THAT THE GOV WOULD MOVE IT. [REDACTED] BELIEVED THE GOV WOULD RESERVE THE REMAINING STOCKS FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES.

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DECEMBER 20

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4. (C) THE GOVERNMENT TELEVISION STATION IS PROVIDING EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY TO A REPORT THAT THE MILITARY WILL DELIVER 150 TANK WAGONS TO CARACAS ON DECEMBER 20.

[REDACTED] INFORMED ECONOFF THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT THE GOV WAS GOING TO ATTEMPT TO TRUCK GASOLINE IN FROM THE COAST AT LA GUAIRA BY TRUCK. HE REPORTED THAT CHEVRONTXACO,S NETWORK WAS STILL COMPLETELY DRY, ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE HAD HEARD BY WORD OF MOUTH THAT SOME PDV STATIONS HAD RECEIVED PRODUCT OVERNIGHT. [REDACTED] CALCULATED THAT 150 TANKERS WOULD SUPPLY 40 PERCENT OF THE NORMAL DAILY DEMAND OF THE GREATER CARACAS AREA. BOTH [REDACTED] PROMISED TO TRY TO VERIFY THE GOV CLAIM.

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IMPORTED SUPPLIES?

5. (C) CHARGE AND ECONOFF MET WITH A WELL-INFORMED U.S. BUSINESSMAN ON DECEMBER 20. HE REPORTED THAT THE GOV HAD ATTEMPTED TO IMPORT GASOLINE FROM THE HOVENSA REFINERY IN ST. CROIX BUT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO FIND A SHIP OWNER WILLING TO TRANSPORT IT. HE REPORTED THAT THE MOST LIKELY SOURCE FOR

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SUBJECT: CARACAS GASOLINE SITUATION

GASOLINE EXPORTS TO VENEZUELA IS THE U.S., GIVEN THAT
SUPPLIES IN THE CARIBBEAN ARE ALSO DROPPING BECAUSE OF THE
PDVSA STRIKE. FINALLY, HE NOTED THAT THE GOV IS NOW OFFERING
SO MUCH MONEY TO SHIPPERS THAT HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT SOMEONE
(GREEK-FLAGGED VESSELS) WOULD EVENTUALLY BRING GASOLINE IN
FROM THE U.S. GULF COAST. WHEN QUESTIONED HOW LONG THAT
WOULD TAKE, HE SPECULATED ABOUT 10 DAYS.

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COMMENT

6. (C) THE GOV MAY BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO DRIBBLE A SMALL
AMOUNT OF PRODUCT INTO CARACAS OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS
BUT WE SEE LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT IT WILL BE ABLE TO BRING
ENOUGH PRODUCT IN TO KEEP THE CITY FROM SUBSTANTIALLY RUNNING
DRY. SERVICE STATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN RUNNING ON LOW
INVENTORIES HAVE RECEIVED ONE-QUARTER OR LESS OF THEIR NORMAL
DELIVERIES OVER THE PAST WEEK. ONCE THAT TRICKLE STOPPED,
STATION TANKS DRIED UP QUICKLY. OUR SOURCES CONCUR THAT
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THERE IS STILL SOME GASOLINE IN STOCKS AT THE VARIOUS

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REFINERIES (AS WELL AS ON AT LEAST TWO TANKERS NOW AT
ANCHOR) , BUT BULK DELIVERIES TO CARACAS USUALLY COME BY BOAT.
TRUCKING IS PROVING A POOR ALTERNATIVE.
COOK

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